

Third Quarter Regional Research Meeting: Northern Region, Ghana

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The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government’s Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three regional projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads the program’s monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. <http://africa-rising.net/>

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# Background

Africa RISING project in Ghana is a USAID government funded project led by International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). It is a research project into sustainable intensification and integration of natural resources to improve productivity, nutrition, income security and reduce hunger and poverty in smallholder families especially children and women. The project is being implemented in the three northern regions of Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West). In Northern Region the project is implemented in two districts, namely Tolon and Savelugu Districts. The project is implemented in five communities (Jana, Duko, Botingli, Tibali and Kpallung) in Savelugu Distirct and five communities (Cheyohi No. 2, Tingoli, Gbanjon, Tibogunayili and Kprim) in Tolon District.

# Regional Research Meetings

Africa RISING project Ghana organizes quarterly regional research meetings in the 3 northern regions. The objective of the meetings is to provide a platform for interaction among work research theme leaders, FBOs and other partners to foster integrated approach for implementing project activities.

# Highlights of Regional Research meeting

The meeting was held on 22nd December, 2015 at IITA conference hall in Tamale, Ghana. Participants included; research theme leaders, FBO members from all intervention communities, District Directors of Agriculture, Research for Development (R4D) platform members and District nutrition officers.

## Meeting objectives and expected outcomes

The key objective of this meeting is to provide a niche for interaction among research theme leaders and partners to foster collaborative approach in planning and implementing project activities. Specific objectives of the regional research meeting were to present:

1. Progress of implementation of project activities;
2. Challenges affecting implementation of project activities;
3. Plan activities for the next quarter.

The expected outcomes of the meeting were to:

1. Deliver progress report for implementation of project activities
2. Identify challenges affecting implementation of project and possible solutions.
3. Propose activities for the next quater.

## Meeting process

The meeting was chaired by the Savelugu Municipal Director of Agriculture, Mr. Francis Neindow. He began the meeting with self-introduction of all the participants.

# Welcome address by Regional Co-coordinator

Mr. Abdul Rahman Nurudeen, Research Associate of AR in the Northern Region on behalf of Dr. Asamoah Larbi, the Chief Scientist of Africa RISING West Africa gave a warm welcome address to all participants. In his welcome address, he said the meeting was aimed at bringing partners together to collaborate so that project interventions efforts can be harmonized.

# Improving cereal-legume cropping system trials in Northern Region

Mr. Abdul-Rahman Nurudeen made a presentation to update participants on cereal-legume cropping system activities carried out from July to September, 2015.

Activities carried out included:

• Establishment of mother, baby and upscaling trials

• Agronomic management

• Data collection

• Research meetings and workshops

He also mentioned that, AR hosted a five member reviewer team for the second phase in September and October 2015. He added that the evaluation team interacted with a lot of farmer based organizations (FBOs) from all the three intervention regions of northern Ghana and were generally impressed with the response. He added that the visit coincided with the periods scheduled for field days; AR therefore could not organize 2015 cropping season field days. However results obtained from the field days organized in the last 2014 cropping season were presented. He said farmers’ choices and preference were influenced by factors like accessibility, affordability, replicability and performance of technology. He added that for all the technologies introduced by AR, both males and females farmers in attendance during the field days selected their preference. The results obtained for each technology in terms of farmers’ preference were as follows:

1. Farmer in both Tolon/Kumbungu and Savulugu/Nanton districts preferred higher rate of Nitrogen on maize.
2. For maize variety, Tolon farmers selected Obatanpa variety while Savelugu farmers selected DT SR W CO F2 variety.
3. Farmers in both districts selected Triple superphosphate (TSP) plus Fertisoil (F) plus Boost xtra as the best integrated soil fertility management on soybean.
4. All the districts selected Jenguma variety of soybean because of its non-shattering ability.
5. Recommended rate of P on groundnut was preferred by Tolon; Savulugu on the other hand chose higher rate of Phosphorus.
6. In terms of preference for groundnut variety, farmers in Tolon preferred Chinese while Savulugu farmers selected Obolo.
7. Zaayura variety of cowpea was preferred by farmers of Tolon whereas farmers of Savulugu chose Padituya

He also added the number of challenges that hindered the smooth implementation of the research team activities as follows:

* Late start of the season
* Limited resources

He concluded his presentation on activity plan for the next quarter as follows:

1. Data entering and cleaning
2. Data analysis and reporting
3. Scientific symposium
4. Plan activities for next growing season

# Socioeconomic studies on profitability of Africa RISING technologies

Mr Frimpong, Socio-economic Research Associate also made brief presentation on a socio-economic research findings. The presentation was titled “should maize farmers increase Nitrogen fertilization to raise economic benefit?” He said AR has been assessing a number of technologies through demonstration and adaptive trials. According to him, decisions by farmers to participate and switch to those new agricultural technologies were dependent on multiple economic factors at different scales. He indicated that the data obtained from both mother and baby maize-nitrogen technology trials were used to assess the economic returns from increased nitrogen fertilization among smallholder farmers in dry savanna zone of Ghana. He added that over 70% of all projected increase in global populations would occur in developing countries and developing countries are still the poorest in terms of food productivity growth. It is imperative, to explore options for enhancing agricultural productivity growth and raise food production in these countries. Maize production provides a valuable opportunity to avert this fear, particularly in Africa where maize constitutes major component of household diet, food imports and aid.

The possibility for maize yield improvements in developing countries has remained large since there are large gaps in the production level between the actual and achievable maize yields. According to him, between 2000 and 2013, Africa was the least producer with regard to continental maize production with the highest being the America and Oceania. He attributed the low production level of Africa to low inputs of nitrogen fertilizer. He emphasized further on the global N fertilizer consumption, and Africa was the least consumer of N fertilizer globally. He went further to project the correlation between maize production and fertilizer, the correlation showed a positive relation between the two variables as maize production increased steadily with increasing N fertilizer application.

He therefore concluded his presentation with a three point recommendation. These include

1. Although recommended maize fertilizer rate for many countries have variously been set by the respective sector ministries, beside it been a blanket recommendation for all agro-ecological zones, soil conditions have further deteriorated over the years and therefore raising the level may help raise yield.
2. High nitrogen fertilization provides greater economic benefits to farmers. However, varietal differences have no influence on yield.
3. Therefore, to sustainably intensify maize production, nitrogen fertilization should be increased. Raising nitrogen fertilization increases maize yield and raises the benefit accruing to farmers.

Improving household nutrition in Northern Ghana

Dr. Mahama Saaka, the team leader of improving household nutrition made a presentation on the activities that have been carried out so far. He stated that a study was conducted to evaluate the impact of linking the production and consumption of locally available micronutrient-rich foods with public health behaviour change communication (BCC) strategies on dietary diversity and nutritional status. According to him, the results revealed that nutritional status of children 6-59 months in the program communities as of September 2015 showed that global acute malnutrition (GAM) levels were highest in the younger age group of 6-11 months. He also added that the highest level of acute under-nutrition was recorded in the Savelugu District.

He concluded on the next plan of activities as follows:

1. Community health workers (CHWs) will continue to give appropriate advice to mothers especially at Growth monitoring and promotion (GMP) sessions and during home visits.
2. Formation/re-activation of IYCF support groups which should meet monthly in each community.
3. Documentation of mother to – mother support groups in the program communities.
4. CHWs will continue to give appropriate advice to mothers especially at GMP sessions and during home visits.
5. Formation/re-activation of IYCF support groups which should meet monthly in each community.
6. Documentation of mother to – mother support groups in the program communities.
7. Demonstration on how to prepare enriched energy- and nutrient- rich dishes with local ingredients (cereals, legumes, eggs, and vegetables) will be carried out.
8. Strengthening of home visits as a means of providing families in caring for children
9. CHWs should record routine monthly weights in a record book, which feed in to a monthly report on program activities and monitoring indicators.

Sustainable intensification of small ruminant production in Northern Ghana

Mr. Hamid Sadat on behalf of Dr. Franklin Avornyo briefed participants on small ruminant feed and interventions in his presentation. He stated that feed and health intervention package in 6 out of 9 priority intervention communities in northern Ghana under the Africa RISING project is been implemented by CSIR-Animal Research Institute, in partnership with International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). He said the study was to improve small ruminant productivity through simple intervention packages like supplementary feeding and veterinary health care. He further listed implement activities as:

1. Establishment of trial across the three northern regions
2. Data collections
3. Monitoring of trials

He concluded on the key implementation challenges and strategies as follows:

1. Difficulty in acquisition of some feed ingredients locally, notably maize bran and cotton seed. Coping strategy: ARI still supports farmers to acquire ingredients that are not available locally. Seeking of alternative, locally available materials.
2. Late arrival of funds due to institutional policies. Coping strategy: local mobilization of funds to continue with critical implementation activities.
3. Difficulty in apprehending goats for treatment and weighing. Coping strategy
4. Poor quarantine/isolation measures for sick animals leading to contamination of entire flocks. Coping strategy: Prophylactic treatment of unaffected flocks to prevent spread of infection.

# Report on Savelugu MoFA activities

Mr. Francis Abdulai Neidow, Director of Agriculture in charge of Savelugu Municipal, also made a presentation on the progress of AR activities in the district. Home and farm visits were conducted to monitor and advise beneficiary farmers on good agronomic practices on their farms as well as strict adherence to the research protocols. Two hundred and one (201) farms were visited at least twice during these months of reporting. Harvesting of some cowpea farms started in September followed by groundnuts, maize and Soybeans.

He ended his presentation with challenges and concerns raised by farmer based organization in the district as follows:

1. The drought experienced within September and October has adversely affected the yields of all the commodities. Therefore they will be glad if IITA/Africa Rising can assist them to get tractors during the cropping season for hiring or support them to buy the tractors so that the group can own them.
2. The farmers were very grateful for the visitation by Africa Rising official from abroad.
3. Unavailable tractor services which make it impossible for some of them to do land preparation at the right time.
4. Up-scaling is preferred to the baby trials.
5. Provision of irrigation facilities for the communities to keep the farmers in farming even during the long dry season period.

# Report on Tolon MoFA activities

Madam Mbah on behalf the Tolon director of Agriculture presented the activities carried out below:

1. Harvesting of demonstration fields
2. Data collection
3. Discussion on the performance of various demonstration

# Report on Savelugu R4D activities

Mr. Mohammed Abdul Rahman (R4D member) presented on behalf of Savelegu R4D on the activities they carried out:

1. Debrief R4D platform on facilitation and climate change workshop organized by IITA
2. Discussion on reconstitution of R4D platform
3. Sustaining activities of R4D.
4. Sensitization Activities in the municipality on R4D platform. Meetings

Below were the next plans of activities

1. Distribution of letters to organizations on R4D.
2. Organize sensitization sessions on R4D activities.
3. Identify and meet with stakeholders to be included in R4D platform.

He concluded on the challenges facing swift implementation of R4D activities

* Difficulties in organizing meeting during the farming period of the year since most key actors are farmers.
* Lack of enough funding

# Closing remarks

The chairman of the meeting (Mr. Francis Abdulai Neindow ) thanked all participants for making the monthly regional research team meeting fruitful and asked all activity leaders to continue working hard for the success of the AR project.

# Annexes

**Annex 1:** List of Participants at 3rd quarter regional research meeting

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| **S/N** | **Name** | **Position** | **Institution** |
| 1 | Inusah Adam | Contact person | Cheyohi |
| 2 | Fuseini A. Majeed | Contact person | Tingoli |
| 3 | Amadu Adam | Contact person | CKprim |
| 4 | Ziblim Fuseini | Contact person | Botingli |
| 5 | Abukari Abdul-Nasir | Contact person | Gbanjong |
| 6 | Ahmed Issah | Contact person | Jana |
| 7 | Nassam Mohammed | Contact person | Kpalung |
| 8 | Issah Mohammed Saani | Contact person | Duko |
| 9 | Yakubu Abdul-Rahaman | Contact person | Tibali |
| 10 | Alhassan Fuseini | Contact person | Tiborgunayili |
| 11 | Mohammed A Sherrif | R4D Secretary | R4D-Savelugu |
| 12 | Issah Abukari | R4D Treasurer | R4D-Tolon |
| 13 | Felix Oteng Dwaah | R4D member | R4D-Savelugu |
| 14 | Francis A. Neindow | Director | Dept of agric-Savelugu |
| 15 | Mbah Sylverline | Extension Officer | Dept of Agric-Tolon |
| 16 | Iddrisu Baba Mohammed | Extension Officer | Dept of agric |
| 17 | Amidatu Adam | WIAD officer | Dept. of agric-Tolon |
| 18 | Fauzia Sadick | WIAD officer | Dept. of agric-Savelugu |
| 19 | Sadat Salifu | Research Scientist | CSIR-ARI |
| 20 | Solomon P. Konlam | Research Scientist | CSIR-ARI |
| 21 | Dr Mahama Saaka | Lecturer | UDS-Tamale |
| 22 | Issahaku Zakaria | Agric Business Advisor | SNV |
| 23 | Arnold S. Ampiah | Data Analyse | IITA-N2Africa |
| 24 | Albert Berdjour | Research Assistant | IITA-SARD SC |
| 25 | Abdul Rahman Nurudeen | Research Associate | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 26 | Stephen Frimpong | Research Associate | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 27 | Mohammed Amisu | Research Supervisor | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 28 | Ebenezer Nartey | Research Supervisor | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 29 | Nancy Adobea Addo | Research Supervisor | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 30 | Dokurugu Fuseini | Research Technician | IITA-Africa RISING |
| 31 | Sumani W. Dawuda | Field Technician | IITA |
| 32 | Mohammed Mustapha | Field Technician | IITA |
| 33 | Mohammed Seidu | Service personnel | IITA |